October 2024

**To Social Services and Community Committee**

Please find attached our submission on the Social Workers Registration Amendment Bill 2024

For any further inquiries, please contact:

Mojo Mathers

Chief Executive

policy@dpa.org.nz

# Introducing Disabled Persons Assembly NZ

**We work on systemic change for the equity of disabled people**

Disabled Persons Assembly NZ (DPA) is a not-for-profit pan-impairment Disabled People’s Organisation run by and for disabled people.

**We recognise:**

* Māori as Tangata Whenua and [Te Tiriti o Waitangi](https://www.archives.govt.nz/discover-our-stories/the-treaty-of-waitangi) as the founding document of Aotearoa New Zealand;
* disabled people as experts on their own lives;
* the [Social Model of Disability](https://www.odi.govt.nz/guidance-and-resources/guidance-for-policy-makes/) as the guiding principle for interpreting disability and impairment;
* the [United Nations Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities](https://www.un.org/development/desa/disabilities/convention-on-the-rights-of-persons-with-disabilities.html) as the basis for disabled people’s relationship with the State;
* the [New Zealand Disability Strategy](https://www.odi.govt.nz/nz-disability-strategy/) as Government agencies’ guide on disability issues; and
* the [Enabling Good Lives Principles](https://www.enablinggoodlives.co.nz/about-egl/egl-approach/principles/), [Whāia Te Ao Mārama: Māori Disability Action Plan](https://www.health.govt.nz/publication/whaia-te-ao-marama-2018-2022-maori-disability-action-plan), and [Faiva Ora: National Pasifika Disability Disability Plan](https://www.moh.govt.nz/notebook/nbbooks.nsf/0/5E544A3A23BEAECDCC2580FE007F7518/%24file/faiva-ora-2016-2021-national-pasifika-disability-plan-feb17.pdf) as avenues to disabled people gaining greater choice and control over their lives and supports.

**We drive systemic change through:**

**Rangatiratanga / Leadership**: reflecting the collective voice of disabled people, locally, nationally and internationally.

**Pārongo me te tohutohu / Information and advice**: informing and advising on policies impacting on the lives of disabled people.

**Kōkiri / Advocacy**: supporting disabled people to have a voice, including a collective voice, in society.

**Aroturuki / Monitoring**: monitoring and giving feedback on existing laws, policies and practices about and relevant to disabled people.

## United Nations Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities

DPA was influential in creating the United Nations Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (UNCRPD),[[1]](#footnote-2) a foundational document for disabled people which New Zealand has signed and ratified, confirming that disabled people must have the same human rights as everyone else. All state bodies in New Zealand, including local and regional government, have a responsibility to uphold the principles and articles of this convention.

The following UNCRPD articles are particularly relevant to this submission:

* **Article 27 – Work and employment**
* **Article 28 – Adequate standard of living and social protection**

## New Zealand Disability Strategy 2016-2026

Since ratifying the UNCRPD, the New Zealand Government has established a Disability Strategy[[2]](#footnote-3) to guide the work of government agencies on disability issues. The vision is that New Zealand be a non-disabling society, where disabled people have equal opportunity to achieve their goals and aspirations, and that all of New Zealand works together to make this happen. It identifies eight outcome areas contributing to achieving this vision.

The following outcomes are particularly relevant to this submission:

* **Outcome 2 – Employment and Economic Security**
* **Outcome 5 – Accessibility**
* **Outcome 7 – Choice and Control**

# The Submission

DPA welcomes this opportunity to feedback to the Social Services and Community Select Committee on the Social Workers Registration Amendment Bill.

**DPA supports this Bill proceeding.**

A considerable number of disabled people rely on the advice and support provided by social workers to navigate the disabling society we live in.

Many social workers are employed by disability service providers and other government and non-government organisations.

The work that social workers do is highly regarded in the disability community as they often act as the advocates disabled people need when seeking to access services and support.

However, there have been times as well when a minority of social workers have been unprofessional and even perpetuated or been party to the historic abuse of disabled people as related by the recently released Royal Commission of Inquiry into Abuse in Care Whanaketia report.[[3]](#footnote-4)

That is why DPA welcomes the provisions of the Bill which strengthen provisions around the ability of the Social Worker Complaints and Disciplinary Tribunal to suspend and investigate social workers for either unprofessional conduct and/or committing criminal offences while employed within the profession.

These provisions recognise the power imbalance which exists between social workers and clients and the importance of recognising this as part of safe practice. It will also mean that people who falsely claim that they are social workers, when they are not formally qualified to hold the title, will be able to be dealt with more effectively.

DPA has no recommendations to make around the Bill

1. <https://social.desa.un.org/issues/disability/crpd/convention-on-the-rights-of-persons-with-disabilities-articles> [↑](#footnote-ref-2)
2. <https://www.odi.govt.nz/nz-disability-strategy> [↑](#footnote-ref-3)
3. <https://www.abuseincare.org.nz/reports/whanaketia> [↑](#footnote-ref-4)